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Does Matthew 19:27-29 Incentivize Leaving Your Spouse to Do Ministry Work?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about what to do about a friend who is actively serving in his church but is living with a married woman and says he has peace about it and whether Matthew 19:27-29 incentivizes leaving your spouse if you feel “called” for the kingdom.

* What should I do about a friend who is actively serving in his church but is living with a married woman and says he has peace about it?

* Does Matthew 19:27-29 incentivize leaving your spouse if you feel “called” for the kingdom?

Transcript

Welcome to Stand to Reason's hashtag, St-R-Ask Podcast. I'm Amy Hall and with me, as always, the great coco. Also, sometimes, have we ever had a sit-in for me? We've had some of the other team here.

I'm not sure if we have. We've got to do that more often. Well, you know what? Way back when you were doing the show with Melinda, I would sit-in with you for you every once in a while.

Okay. But we haven't done that in a while. It's over five years.

Okay, let's start with a question from Eric. I have a friend who I just reconnected with who is in a relationship and living with a married woman. When I pressed him on this lifestyle, not being God's way of doing things, he said he had peace about it.

Apparently, no one at his local church has confronted him about it, even though he serves actively there. What should I do? Well, the answer to this is really easy, but I'm getting- I'm recovering a little bit from the question. He's a Christian serving at his local church, and he's a Christian.

And he's living with a married woman. Where's her husband? Is he there too? I assume not. Am I to understand the living with the married woman means that he is having conjugal relationship with her sexual relationship? There's ambiguities here that are tried and true question.

What do you mean by that? Who is in a relationship and living with? I'm very glad. Okay, so I guess I- He's not just living there. If he has a peace about it, that is a good evidence he is not a Christian.

But it is a- it does make another point. That is that some people determine God's will based on their feelings, and they think they have a verse that justifies this in its Colossians chapter 3, I believe. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

Okay? The word rule means act as arbiter. Be the judge. And so they take away for many people is that if I want to know whether God allows me, wants me to do any particular thing, if it's okay, is if I feel peaceful about it.

If I feel a peace, that is a sign from God. I'm on the right track. That's kind of the way this is done.

Now, of course, they violated a very basic rule. Never read a Bible verse because when you read the chapter, you realize that this passage is not talking at all about what they think it is when they make this application. Okay? It is not talking about the subjective peace in the heart.

It's talking about the objective state of being at peace with other brothers and sisters in Christ. Okay? Read the chapter. It is absolutely crystal clear.

There is no ambiguity at all about that. This is not given by Paul as a means by which we determine what God wants for us. All right.

Secondly, we got lots of verses that speak very clearly about this. And in fact, just to go to 1 Corinthians 6, verse 9, Paul says they are actually, he says that he identifies a bunch of sin. But two of them are neither fornicators.

Oh, let me start out the way he starts out. Do not be deceived. Wake up.

Neither fornicators nor adulterers will inherit the kingdom of God. Let me say that again. Neither fornicators nor adulterers, there's more sins on there.

There's homosexuality too. We're not talking about that. Neither fornicators nor adulterers will inherit the kingdom of God.

If people are living in adultery or living in fornication, they are not in God's kingdom. Or to put another way, if they're living like hell, they are probably going there. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, kind of leading into this verse, he's talking about a circumstance in the

Corinthian church that is mind-boggling to him.

I can't believe it. You have a man who is sleeping with his father's wife as probably a stepmom. Paul is like speechless.

He said, the Gentiles don't even do this. Deal with it. We don't judge those who are outside of the church, but those are in the church.

Oh my goodness. Don't even eat with such a one. So read the passage, Eric, and just a warning to everyone.

The Colossians passage where people use as a proof text is not an appropriate use of Scripture when applied the way that many people apply it, have it in peace in their heart as a guidance from God. And especially when the Scripture speaks very, very clearly about this kind of sexual sin and the consequence of it. So Matthew 18 is the proper place to go to.

Eric, how should I deal with it? You go talk to your brother. Now, apparently you've done that once. And he said, well, I have a piece about it.

So it must be fine. I mean, I'm just like borderline speechless because it's so bizarre. And for me to be borderline speechless, that's really extreme, right? Okay.

So you've gone once. Now you get another brother or two and you go to this supposed brother in Christ and then the three of you, two or three of you, confront him so that every fact can be confirmed by two or three witnesses. So when you, if you must end up going to the leadership of the church with the acts to discipline this person, it's based on the multiple testimony of witnesses that can bear witness to the truth of what this man is doing and the fact that he will not repent from his sin.

And that's when the church says, okay, goodbye. You can't be a part of our community because a little 11, 11, the whole loaf. That's Paul, 1 Corinthians 5. So this is very straightforward.

1 Corinthians 5, 1 Corinthians 6, verse 9 and following, and Matthew 18. There is the pattern. Okay.

Here's a thought though, just a little sad reflection. I don't know anything about the church you go to, Eric, or the leadership there, but I would not be surprised if the leadership does not follow the biblical pattern. It sounds like he's at a different church because Eric says no one at his local church has confronted him.

Oh, so I think you're right. I suspect the church already knows and is okay. Well, then, yeah, well, it would be appropriate.

You still follow the pattern except for the pattern then is to go to, I think, his local church

and talk with leadership there about coming to visit his friend that's living in the circumstances. Follow the same pattern, but if this guy is in a different church. Okay.

Now, if you do that and, and Eric, your friend does not respond, then you are to cut off all association with this person. That's 1 Corinthians 5 and it's not ambiguous. It is straightforward.

It's not an active condescension or viciousness or anything like that. It is, it is an appropriate discipline regarding this person who claims to be a Christian, who I'm pretty convinced is not based on his behavior. And you're following the guidelines of God's word, which are very explicit.

I guess one last thing is if a person is genuinely a Christian, he has the Holy Spirit within him. It does not mean that they can't sin in egregious ways, but they can't keep living in this kind of sin and be comfortable with it because the Holy Spirit is going to have at them. And that's not a fun experience.

Ben there done that. All right. And so his most Christians.

This is how God guides us and disciplines us and brings us to holiness. And he does impart through the work and the use of other Christians in the church following the pattern that he's described. So I have one more thing to say to you, Eric, about the specific situation.

And then I have a couple comments on this whole idea in general of how your friend is making his decisions. But the first thing I wanted to note is obviously this is a friend of yours. You said you just reconnected with him.

So you've gone your separate ways. You're coming back together and you're shocked to discover this. One thing as you're confronting him that you might want to make clear is that you care about all the things you want to make clear.

You know, both him and the people that he could be hurting by his example in his church. But listen to how Paul, because remember in 1 Corinthians Paul kind of lets them have it because they were doing all sorts of things as you mentioned. Great.

And then in 2 Corinthians, listen to what Paul says, I wrote to you with many tears. Let me start one verse earlier. This is chapter 2, verse 4. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears, not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have, especially for you.

But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree, in order not to say too much to all of you. The reason why I continued on there, there's a couple points there. First, Paul was coming to them in love and sorrow for them and concern for them.

It wasn't just, he wanted to make that clear. He wanted them to know that. So that's something you might want to make known to your friend also.

And secondly, the goal was repentance. So he was pleading with them to repent. His goal was not that they would be feel condemned forever.

Once they repent, he wanted them to be comforted and accepted and all those sorts of things. That's the goal of all this. So as you're talking to him and you go through these steps, just remember what the goal is.

And remember what Paul's goal is because Paul was very, very, what's the word? He was brutally honest with the first Corinthians about their sin. So there's nothing wrong with that. But just remember what the goal is and don't lose sight of that.

Secondly, I think this is such a great example of why we need an objective text and not just our feelings in order to know what's right and wrong. Our hearts are fallen. We cannot trust them.

We have this objective text. We know what God has said and we know that we can go wrong. So just because we feel one way about a text, that doesn't make it true.

We are not the arbiters of truth. We have to consider the objective text. And I'm just so thankful that God has given that to us and that we can all look at it together and reason over it together because I can't reason with your feelings, Greg.

If we all have different feelings about something, can you imagine those are the standard? Yes, if that was the standard, we would have so much confusion and chaos in the church. But thankfully we have this objective standard that we can go to. Secondly, well, that was the second one.

This is the third point. It's the second point, general point. It's so obviously wrong to be in a relationship with a married woman.

I mean, this is absolutely clear in the text. And so what this shows me is just how blinding sin can be. And this is something I tell apologists all the time.

You have to kill your sin because your sin will blind you and it will make you stupid. It will make you not see the truth. It is a very scary thing to mess around with sin because you start to make excuses for yourself.

You start to not see things. You should see. You start feeling comfortable with it.

Yes, you feel comfortable with it. You obviously, his friend has a whole explanation. He feels the peace.

That's his new way of determining what's right wrong. Sin is terrifying. So, apologists out

there who are listening, kill your sin.

You do not want to have your reasoning damaged by sin. All right, great. Great for the next question.

Yes, nicely done. Thank you. This one comes from Chris Martins.

In Matthew 19, 27 through 29, Jesus indicates that everyone who leaves homes, family, wives in Luke 14:26 will be rewarded 100 fold. Is Jesus just talking about the situation of the 12? Does this apply to all followers and does this incentivize leaving one spouse if they feel called for the kingdom? So, I, this sounds so familiar and I wonder if it feels like we've answered this before, but maybe you and I have just talked about it. People have asked about this passage before, but not exactly in the same way.

Does this incentivize leaving one spouse if they feel quote called for the kingdom? Well, I think yes, it may incentivize or at least justify in people's minds. Incentivize means it creates the desire for them to do it. And I'd be less inclined to think that it incentivize them rather than justified an incentive that was already in place.

You know that. Okay. And by the way, there were famous missionaries who did this.

CT stud did this as he went away in, I think, 19th century to India and left his whole family at home and then went away to serve the Lord in India. And I don't know if he used this versus justification, but there certainly is this pattern or this happens. And it may be a justification for that that this is my calling.

This is what God's called me do. And I, I then have the liberty to essentially ignore my other filial responsibilities that are that are biblical responsibilities. So it's interesting, just in a very, you know, pragmatic note, first Corinthians seven says the husband's wife belong.

I'm sorry, the husband's body belongs to his wife. And the wife's body belongs to the husband so that they can fulfill their sexual responsibilities to each other and keep from being tempted. I mean, this is the whole context of those first few verses of first Corinthians seven.

Now, how is this possible when there thousands of miles apart for many, many years. And it's not possible is the answer, which means those people are being exposed to unnecessary temptation that God intended them to be protected from through having a corporate acknowledging and fulfilling their own. And I think the corporate responsibility to have one to another in their marriage sexually.

Okay. And this applies obviously not just missionaries, but people in relationships now where they're not apart, but they aren't obeying God in this particular area. And I think that happens a lot more than many people realize first Corinthians seven first few

verses.

Okay. But that's just an example of a responsibility. How do you raise up? How do fathers raise up the children in the ways of the Lord when they're not there to raise them up? I mean, certainly this is an admonition that's properly given to fathers who are absentee fathers, though they sleep at the same house, they're not around enough to help their children to grow spiritually.

Well, it certainly would apply that much more regarding people who leave and go to ministry and other parts of the world. So I don't actually think this is what Matthew, Jesus is talking about here in this Matthew passage. And I do think it's a harder passage.

Okay. And we know that even Peter, he traveled with Jesus, but he still had a home life because we have occasions when they are staying in Peter's home. Peter's mother was sick and Jesus healed him at one point, as I recall.

And Paul says at one point, don't I have a right to bring along a spouse as the other apostles do? So we know they were bringing their spouses with them. Right. So, so I think what Jesus is saying, and he's speaking hyperbolically here too.

In other words, he's not speaking literally. He's saying, you make major, if you are required to make sacrifice because of your circumstance for the kingdom, there is going to be a payoff here. And notice this is not only in this life, but in the life to come.

Well, wait a minute, the disciples responded Jesus there and they say, well, look, we've left everything for you. And so, where are all the other families and houses and all the other things that the disciples got in this life? Well, they didn't get that. And they got persecution.

And I think the point there is Jesus wasn't speaking literally here. He was speaking in the language of reward, satisfaction, fulfillment, whatever, using these other items as, as in a file. And I think that's a figurative fashion.

That's anything what he was getting at in that passage. Also, when he's saying, if people who have left these things for my sake, now, if Jesus doesn't want you to leave your spouse alone with the children or whatever it is, that's not really for Jesus's sake. I'm not sure.

I think that has to play a part in this also. I think, Greg, I think this probably is more about explaining that Jesus is greater than all these other things. So if your parents are forbidding you to be a Christian or whatever it is and you have to walk away from them in order to follow Jesus, then you won't be losing out in the long run.

I talked over the weekend to a young man who was a Muslim, who had a powerful conversion experience. And it was in conjunction with a sermon that he heard about

Matthew 10 where Jesus said, you're going to experience conflict when you follow me, and families are going to turn against you. And he realized that right out of the gate, he realized this is why maybe he was holding back or whatever.

And so he decided to become a Christian. And he's a Pakistani Muslim. And he lost immediately lost all of his family.

And they completely rejected him. But this guy was, I talked to him for about 10 minutes. And I had heard a story before from someone else.

And then I got a chance to meet him. And he was so filled with love and excitement for Christ. It was amazing in light of the price he had to pay.

And so both of these passages are in Matthew that one here about leaving family, etc, etc. And also the one that the family is going to leave you in Matthew 10. And there's going to be conflict.

So I think these things are tied together. And this is the price. This is an adjusification for walking away from our familial responsibilities.

It's a reality that relationships are going to be severed when you are faithful to Christ. Yeah, I think that's a great example because there's an example where it's a stark contrast. If you follow Jesus, you will lose your family.

Now, this isn't the same as saying, if you go do this ministry opportunity, you will lose your family. I don't think that's the same thing that Jesus is talking about. We're supposed to fulfill what Jesus has called us to do in terms of the instructions He's given us in the place where we are.

Paul actually makes this point too. So saying that I'm going to take this ministry opportunity and I have to leave everything that I have a responsibility for is not the same thing as saying I have a responsibility to follow Jesus and I may lose everything because of that. Right.

It's interesting. Your reference, I think, was the first Corinthians 7. Later when Paul is talking about the responsibilities or the decision to be married or to be single. It's interesting what he says in there.

One of those things is the person who's married cannot devote himself as much to ministry because he has familial responsibilities. If you want to have undistracted devotion to the Lord, don't get married. If you do get married, then you are going to have responsibilities that will distract you from the others.

And so your interests are of necessity divided. And I think that's a good point to apply here because policy of necessity, they're going to be divided, not just accidentally. And

this is the way it always turns out.

But you can leave your family if you want to. No, you've got responsibilities that you're obliged to fulfill. And in the Luke passage, the Luke 14 passage he mentions where it says, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Again, that's hyperbole. He's talking about in comparison with Jesus. Again, if they come into conflict, following Jesus, they're not going to be a person.

And that doesn't, obviously he doesn't want us to hate our families because he's told us to love our families. We're supposed to love them. That's very clear.

So he must be talking about something else here. And so I just have to go back to it. That illustration was perfect, Greg.

I think to give people an idea of what I think Jesus is talking about here. All right, we're out of time. Two questions today, Greg.

I like getting on a perfect illustration. Thank you, baby. Well, I hope that helps Chris and Eric.

Thank you for your questions. If you have a question, send it to us on Twitter with the hashtag SDR. Ask or you can go to our website at STR.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Kockel for Stand to Reason.